

## NORMS FOR SUNDAY CELEBRATIONS IN THE ABSENCE OF A PRIEST IN THE DIOCESE OF PORTLAND, MAINE

- I. These norms are intended to implement and further specify the *Directory for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* (1988, Congregation for Divine Worship) for the universal Church and the ritual text *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* (2012, revised edition, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) for use in the dioceses of the United States. The Instruction on the Eucharist, *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (2004, Congregation for Divine Worship), and the statement entitled *Gathered in Steadfast Faith* (1991, United States Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy) serve as additional points of reference.
- II. These norms are intended to govern only those weekend celebrations that are scheduled on an occasional or even regular basis in a parish or mission church of the Diocese of Portland.
  - A. These norms do not govern the unforeseen and exceptional circumstances where communities must resort to the use of Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest because of illness or other reason making the priest unavailable for Mass on short notice.
  - B. These norms do not govern the use of Word and Communion services in institutions such as nursing homes, jails and prisons.
  - C. These norms provide directives regarding the use of Word and Communion Services on Weekdays in Section VI of this document.
- III. REQUISITE CONDITIONS
  - A. Upon receiving the request for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest from the proper pastor or parish coordinator of the place in question, the Bishop or his delegate may permit the occasional or regular, even weekly, celebration of a Sunday celebration in the absence of a priest.
  - B. In granting permission, the Bishop or his delegate will consider the following factors:
    1. That the number of Sunday (including Saturday evening) Masses the pastor or sacramental minister of the place can celebrate and the number of Masses necessary in each location he serves has been evaluated.
    2. That, after a diligent search by the pastor or parish coordinator, and after having consulted the Chancery, a supply priest is not available to celebrate a Mass in the location in question.
    3. In light of numbers 1 and 2, that it is not possible for the parish priest to celebrate any Mass in the location in question beginning at 4:00 p.m. on Saturday or the eve of a Holy Day of Obligation and continuing through the entire day of Sunday or the Holy Day of Obligation.

4. That it is neither practical nor possible for the community to participate in the celebration of Mass in a nearby church.
  5. That the life of the community will unduly suffer from the lack of the celebration of a Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest.
- C. The Bishop or his delegate evaluates the factors listed above after hearing the Vicar Forane and the pastors of the neighboring parishes.
- D. In this Diocese, permission will be granted by the Bishop or his delegate for a definite or indefinite period under the following conditions:
1. There is no celebration of the Eucharist possible at all beginning from 4:00 p.m. Saturday or the eve of a Holy Day of Obligation through the entire day Sunday or the Holy Day of Obligation.
  2. That the proper pastor has submitted his plan for preparing the faithful for the implementation of Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest, his schedule for visiting the faithful in the location(s) in question, the times when he plans to celebrate the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation with them.
  3. That provisions have been made for the celebration of the Eucharist at least twice during the month, either on weekdays or on weekends in locations where Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest will take place.
- E. In this Diocese, if a community meets the conditions set forth in III.B., a Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest will take place in that location even if Mass is celebrated in that same location on a weekday during the week.
- F. The permission for the use of Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest is considered withdrawn when a priest becomes available to celebrate Mass on the weekend on a regular, ongoing basis in the location in question.
- G. The Bishop's Office will conduct an annual evaluation of the conditions that warrant permissions for the Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest and may extend or revoke permission based on the evaluation.

#### IV. MINISTERS OF THE CELEBRATION

- A. Deacons, by virtue of ordination, are expected to lead, read the Gospel, preach and assist in the distribution of Holy Communion at a Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest.
- B. When no deacon is available, the Bishop may designate qualified laypersons to lead the Sunday Celebration.
1. Such persons will be presented by their pastor or parish coordinator.
  2. Leaders will be appointed for a term of three (3) years.
  3. There must be at least two (2) leaders for Sunday Celebrations in each location.

4. Leaders will serve on an alternating or rotating basis, whenever possible.
- C. When no deacon is available, the ministry of preaching at a Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest may be fulfilled in the following ways:
    1. There must be a full complement of liturgical ministers each carrying out only one role, e.g. one leader, at least one reader, one preacher, and an appropriate number of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.
    2. Suitable lay person(s) may be presented by the pastor or parish coordinator and delegated by the Bishop to preach.
    3. The preacher reads a homily that has been written by the pastor.
    4. Those delegated to preach will be appointed for a term of three (3) years.
  - D. In this Diocese, both the leaders of Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest and those delegated to preach at those celebrations who are not deacons are to be commissioned by the Order for the Blessing of Those Who Exercise Pastoral Service (nos. 1808-1826) from the *Book of Blessings* (1989, Congregation for Divine Worship and National Conference of Catholic Bishops).
  - E. In this Diocese, the leaders of Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest, those delegated to preach at those celebrations, and deacons responsible for such celebrations must receive initial formation provided by the Office of the Bishop and/or Ministerial Services. The pastor or parish coordinator of the place is responsible for the ongoing formation of these ministers.

#### V. FORM OF THE CELEBRATION

- A. The only approved form for use in the United States is *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* (2012) published by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.
- B. The celebrations will take place according to nos. 35-50 of the *Directory for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* (1988) and of nos. 23-51 of the *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* (2012).
- C. In this Diocese, a Celebration of the Liturgy of the Word with Holy Communion (Chapter II, nos. 186-216) is the preferred form of celebration.
- D. In this Diocese, at the direction of the pastor or parish coordinator of the place, the leader and the preacher of the celebration may be vested in a white alb or in lay clothes.
- E. In this Diocese, every Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest must include an intention for the pastor or sacramental minister of the place and for an increase of vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life.
- F. The proper readings from the Lectionary and prayers from the Roman Missal for the Sunday or Holy Day of Obligation in question are used.

VI. WORD AND COMMUNION SERVICES ON WEEKDAYS

- A. In this Diocese, word and communion services on weekdays (that are not Holy Days of Obligation) are not to be scheduled on a regular or recurring basis, even when the pastor/priest is away from the parish (*Redemptionis Sacramentum*, no. 166).
- B. On those exceptional occasions when a daily Mass has been scheduled and a priest is not available due to a last minute, unforeseen circumstance, a word and communion service may be celebrated by a duly trained and delegated deacon or lay minister.
- C. On those occasions when a priest is not available but there is a request for a funeral service, a word and communion service may be celebrated by a duly trained and delegated deacon or lay minister. In these circumstances, the family of the deceased may also be encouraged to have a Mass of Christian Burial at a later date when a priest is available.
- D. Other forms of prayer, including communal praying of the Liturgy of the Hours or Exposition and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament (with Benediction when possible) are to be fostered.

Promulgated on this, the third day of June, on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, in the year of our Lord two thousand and eighteen, at the Chancery of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland.

  
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Most Reverend Robert P. Deeley, J.C.D., Bishop of Portland

  
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Sister Rita-Mae Bissonnette, RSR, Chancellor